

passage because there are a lot of people around here who have these different commodities, and they all vote for each other, and, as a result, they build up enough votes to pass this bill. That is the way the farm bill always works. But that is no reason why we should not have a chance to debate it, to address some of these issues, such as baby doctors in rural communities and farm communities, such as the need for firefighters to have adequate bargaining rights, such as the need for people who are getting foreclosed on not getting hit with an IRS bill, such as the need to have proper accounting on this bill for what they are actually spending, such as the need for not setting up a \$5 billion walking-around money fund, such as the need for the new commodities programs for asparagus, chickpeas, and camellia. We should have amendments to address all these issues. That is what the process of the Senate is all about. But it is being denied here. The result of that denial is that those of us who happen to believe the Senate should function as a place where things are amended and discussed and aired and heard are going to have to resist this bill. So the majority seems to want to kill this bill, which is unfortunate, because in the end, this bill should at least get a fair hearing.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator's time has expired.

Mr. GREGG. Thank you, Mr. President.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from South Carolina has 7½ minutes.

KEEPING PROMISES

Mr. DEMINT. Mr. President, I think we came into this year very hopeful in a lot of ways. The Republicans lost the majority, and in some ways I think that is a good thing. We lost our discipline on spending, and for many years our Democratic colleagues were more than happy to help us and even try to one-up us during the period we were in the majority.

Our last act as the majority, though, was a good one. We were able to stop last year's omnibus bill and force Congress to move ahead under a continuing resolution that only had about 2,000 earmarks—wasteful earmarks. This year, the majority unfortunately has expanded that back to about 6,000, which is disappointing because we entered the year with a lot of promises from the new majority, a lot of hopes about things that would change. Our Democratic colleagues ran on cleaning up the culture of corruption and getting rid of a lot of wasteful earmarks.

I, for one, wanted to help. In fact, one of the first things I did this year was introduce NANCY PELOSI's, Speaker PELOSI's, earmark transparency bill in the Senate. Unfortunately, the new majority decided it wasn't right the way they did it and filled it full of loopholes, and we have been fighting

all year to try to continue to disclose a lot of this wasteful spending.

Now, as I said, as we end the year, instead of the 2,000 earmarks we were at last year, we are going to 6,000 plus. We are also way over budget. The amount we have over budget this year will translate over the next 10 years to about \$300 billion in additional spending. That is a lot of money for anyone to even conceive of, but just so Americans will know, that amount would allow us to continue the tax relief we have had for the last several years for another 10 years without spending any additional money as a government. That tax relief affects every American. Instead, because we haven't acted, because we haven't kept our promises, next year millions of Americans, middle-class Americans will experience a new tax that they have never experienced before, and a lot of them don't know it is coming.

The disappointment, I guess, as we end this year is there are so many needs as a nation that we haven't acted on. Instead, we have spent the year with 40 resolutions on Iraq. We have tried to expand Government health care, holding children hostage to moving to more Government-controlled health care. The 40 Iraq resolutions were all done holding our troops hostage and the funding for our troops and the weapons and the armament they need to succeed. We spent the year on things such as trying to eliminate the secret ballot for workers when folks are trying to unionize them. Workers have always had the freedom to vote secretly and not be coerced or intimidated, but we have held workers hostage this year.

We have all of these new wasteful earmarks. Americans have heard about them, whether it is a hippie museum or monuments to different Members of Congress, billion-dollar parks at the expense of our veterans funds. We have balled that all up as we go into the end of the year \$300 billion over budget for the next 10 years with wasteful earmarks, including monuments to ourselves. I think we have done something even worse than the wasteful spending because we have tied to this wasteful spending ball at the end of the year the most vulnerable and disadvantaged in our society. We have tied the children to it. We have said they need more health care. We have tied our troops to it, and we are holding them hostage. Instead of giving them the money they need over the next several months, we are tying them up and holding them hostage.

Our veterans, we filled the Veterans bill with wasteful earmarks, and we are holding our veterans hostage. We have basically made human shields out of the most vulnerable Americans, and we are challenging Members of the Senate and Members of the House: Vote for this bill that is billions over budget, that contains billions of wasteful earmarks. You either vote for this bill or you are voting against children and

veterans and seniors and voting against our troops. This is no way to run the most important Government in the world.

So we end the year with a lot of broken promises. We have not helped Americans buy health insurance; in fact, we have made it harder. We haven't cut spending; we have raised it. We have increased the number of earmarks from last year. All we have done is talk. While our troops are succeeding in Iraq, we are trying to cut their funding. Instead of broken promises, we need to focus on the promises we need to keep.

We have promised Americans since the beginning of our Constitution that we are going to protect them. That is our main purpose. We need to keep our promises to seniors because we have taken their money all their lives and promised them Social Security and Medicare will be there. We need to keep those promises. We need to keep the promise of making freedom work for everyone and not to use the problems in our society as an excuse to replace freedom with more Government, which is what we are in the process of doing at every turn in Washington.

I appreciate the opportunity to speak, and I hope we can end the year in a more bipartisan fashion and work on reducing the amount of spending, the wasteful earmarks, and try to focus our efforts on the real priorities of this country that affect real Americans and not to hold our people hostage to this wasteful spending. We have just another month or so to finish our business, and I hope we finish it with some honor and dignity in a way that the American people would regain some trust in this Senate and in this Congress.

Mr. President, I yield the floor, and I note the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from Michigan is recognized.

GETTING RESULTS

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, I come to the floor because it is amazing to listen to my friends on the other side of the aisle lament what they view are things not getting done when, in fact, we are getting things done. The truth is, we have been operating this year with an extraordinary slowness on the other side of the aisle because, first of all, they have participated in 52 filibusters since the beginning of the year—52 filibusters, maybe 53 by the end of the week, every week now. This is unprecedented. It never happened before. It never happened before; to see the minority in the Senate obstruct,